



THURSDAY, JUNE 13

3:00 – 5:00 PM
THE GALLERY, 2ND FLOOR

Early Registration

Registration will be available for guests arriving onsite Thursday. Please stop by to grab conference materials!

5:30 PM – 8:30 PM
SUMMIT ROOFTOP

Welcome Reception

To kick off our time together, please join the VELA team, fellow founders, partners and supporters for cocktails and conversation.

FRIDAY, JUNE 14

7:00 – 8:45 AM
THE GALLERY

Registration

Registration is available before the Opening Plenary. Please stop by to grab conference materials!

7:30 – 8:30 AM
THE GALLERY, 2ND FLOOR

Breakfast

Breakfast is available for all event attendees. Fuel up for an action-packed day!

9:00 AM – 10:00 AM
GRAND BALLROOM

VELA Con 2024 Opening Session: New Frontiers in Education

Join us for an inspirational kickoff to VELA Con 2024! Experience the power of the VELA Founder Network by exploring New Frontiers in Education, featuring founders who are boldly leading the way. Special guest appearances you won't want to miss!

10:20 AM – 11:10 AM
CONSERVATORY AB

Workshop: Reimagining Time, Space, and Labor to Keep Costs Low

Most VELA Founders operate learning environments that creatively reimagine time, space, and labor to keep costs low. But how do they do it? This workshop-style session will provide insights and stories from leaders who are pushing the boundaries of where and how learning happens. Come ready to ask questions and explore tangible examples of unique organizational structures and practices built for sustainability.

Moderator: *Amber Okolo-Ebube*

Speakers: *Addison Morgan, Chrystal Bernard, Desiree Corbin*

10:20 AM – 11:10 AM
BALLROOM AB

The “Jobs To Be Done” for School Alternatives: What’s Driving Founders

VELA recently partnered with The Clayton Christensen Institute for Disruptive Innovation, the Re-Wired Group, and Stand Together Trust to explore what motivates founders to start alternatives to conventional schooling. Learn about the motivations and trade-offs that founders make to provide products and services most valued by the families they serve.

Moderator: *Matt Frendewey*

Speakers: *Coi Morefield, Madeline Herrera, Tobin Slaven*

10:20 AM – 11:10 AM
BALLROOM D

The New Frontier Is Here: Signals from the Field

As the traditional school system grapples with declining enrollment and chronic absenteeism, the question of “where are the students?” has become a hot topic among media and policy makers alike. At the same time, founders in the VELA Founder Network are experiencing unprecedented and sustained demand. Hear from founders of learning environments who are witnessing the growth of this sector firsthand and explore the barriers and opportunities ahead.

Moderator: *Adam Peshek*

Speakers: *Nasiyah Isra-Ul, Amber Brown, Constance Bradley*

11:25 AM – 12:15 PM
CONSERVATORY AB

Landing the Pitch: Making Earned Media Work for You

Earned media can be a powerful tool for founders looking to reach new audiences. But how do you craft a compelling pitch or make the most out of a media opportunity? Hear from public relations experts and a former journalist about how to frame your story to drive interest, action, and engagement. Leave with strategies and tips to reach new external audiences through earned media.

Moderator: *Lindsay Kelly*

Speakers: *Dan Bank, Karen Testa*

11:25 AM – 12:15 PM
BALLROOM AB

Measure What Matters: Learner Outcomes in Nontraditional Education

VELA recently surveyed its national network of founders to better understand how learner outcomes are defined and measured in the out-of-system space. This field research confirms that founders have an expansive view of learner success and apply a variety of methods for engaging learners and assessing their progress. Join the session to hear trends and insights on accountability from across the VELA Founder Network, including how their approaches are driving a median annual growth rate of 25% across the network. Founders will share a variety of approaches used to ensure their learning environment is fulfilling its ultimate goal—effectively meeting the needs of the learners and families that they serve.

Moderator: *Beth Seling*

Speakers: *Shiren Rattigan, Emily Niehaus, Makenzie Oliver*

11:25 AM – 12:15 PM
BALLROOM D

Customer-Driven Sustainability

VELA is a movement of founders building sustainable businesses. These resourceful entrepreneurs offer access to low-cost private solutions without dependence on public funding or outside interests. Join this important session to learn how these founders are champions of autonomy - ensuring that their focus remains on delivering quality education tailored to the unique needs of each family - and in turn, how they are revolutionizing education.

Moderator: Lauren Grevel

Speakers: Felicia Wright, Constance Bradley, Angie Wakeman

12:15 PM – 12:45 PM
THE GALLERY

Lunch

Please grab a boxed lunch ahead of our lunchtime plenary session.

12:45 PM – 1:30 PM
GRAND BALLROOM

Lunch: Education and the American Dream

We are delighted to welcome preeminent thought leaders driving societal change at the intersection of journalism, philanthropy, and cultural transformation. Join **Todd Rose**, best-selling author, professor, and social entrepreneur, and **Derek Johnson**, senior vice president of Stand Together, for a conversation facilitated by **Katherine Mangu-Ward**, editor-in-chief of *Reason* magazine. Participants will explore the growth of unconventional schooling and what it means for the future of education, our society, and the American Dream.

1:50 PM – 2:40 PM
CONSERVATORY AB

Harnessing Technology to Activate the VELA Founder Network

VELA's greatest asset is its growing network of founders and the collaboration and knowledge-sharing that happens voluntarily between them. To support this, VELA has invested in the creation of a digital resource platform where founders have self-service access to essential tools, training, and resources designed to enhance their programming and sustainability. This platform will also serve as a dynamic hub where families and donors will be able to directly connect with programs aligned to their values and priorities. Get a sneak peek of what we are building and learn more about our vision for the future.

Speakers: Ashley Ho, Ryan Clem

1:50 PM – 2:40 PM
BALLROOM AB

Real Accountability: Finding Assessment Tools That Work for You

In a recent survey of the VELA Founder Network, founders report that they embrace an expansive view of learner success, and they are defining learner success and measuring it: 85% of programs use assessment tools created by their staff, 36% use standardized assessments, and 59% use adaptive technology such as Khan Academy. Ultimately, the best tool is the one that meets the needs of learners and families in your community. Hear from founders who share a range of approaches for assessing student learning, and how they leverage them to achieve real accountability - meeting the needs of the learners and families they serve.

Moderator: Serena Deutch

Speakers: Niki Harris, Terry Henry II, Caleb Collier

1:50 PM – 2:40 PM
BALLROOM D

New Frontiers in Philanthropy

When philanthropy is built on shared vision, values, and trust, it amplifies creativity and expands founders' capacity to serve their constituents effectively. In this session, hear from philanthropic leaders and VELA partners on how they invest – and achieve significant and meaningful impact – using a partnership- and values-based approach.

Moderator: *Derek Johnson*

Speakers: *Grant Coates, Luke Ragland, Chrystal Bernard*

2:55 PM – 3:45 PM
CONSERVATORY AB

Show Me the Money: Understanding Creative Revenue Models

VELA is a network of founders building sustainable businesses. Across the VELA Founder Network, the median program earns 70% of its revenue from participants, and median monthly cost per learner is \$450. Hear from founders who are leveraging creative and effective revenue models to keep costs as low as possible, as well as from ecosystem builders who use technology to simplify payment processing for microschoools. Leave with new tools and strategies to enhance your business model.

Moderator: *Lauren Grevel*

Speakers: *Luba Vangelova, Korene Senior, Danielle Stella, Felicia Wright*

2:55 PM – 3:45 PM
BALLROOM AB

Journeys on the New Frontier: Why Do Families Switch?

There is much speculation about why families might pursue alternatives to traditional schooling. The voices of the families who followed through and made the switch are not represented often enough. Hear directly from families about what motivated them to choose an alternative to conventional schooling, and how this decision impacted their learner. Explore research insights about how family and founder motivations are driving unprecedented shifts in the landscape of K-12 education, and how founders of alternative learning environments are rising to the occasion to serve a growing market of families.

Moderator: Matt Frendewey

Speakers: Alycia Wright, Alexandria Wright, Jeana Wilson

2:55 PM – 3:45 PM
BALLROOM D

When Policy and Practice Align: Opportunities to Support Alternatives to Conventional Schooling

With the expansion of public policies that empower families to choose where, when, and how their learners experience school, there have been both opportunities and setbacks for founders offering alternatives to conventional schooling. Learn more about the evolving landscape and how new learning environments are thriving both in and outside of states with favorable school choice policies. Hear from experts about the trade-offs at hand when it comes to more families accessing education solutions that respond to their unique values, priorities, and desired education practices.

Moderator: Andrew Clark

Speakers: Derrell Bradford, Robert Enlow, Adam Peshek

4:00 PM – 4:50 PM
CONSERVATORY AB

Workshop: Meet Them Where They Are - Marketing Across the Customer Journey

The right digital marketing strategy helps you meet your customers where they are, moving them from awareness to action. Join this workshop to gain actionable tips from founders using a wide range of marketing tactics to attract, recruit, and retain their customers. Leave with strategies, tools, and resources that make it easier for you to market your learning environment or program.

Moderator: Lindsay Kelly

Speakers: Toni Fralliciardi, Justin Shell, Blair Lee

4:00 PM – 4:50 PM
BALLROOM D

Bridging the Gap: Pathways to College, Workforce, and Beyond

As seasoned homeschoolers know, there are many myths and misunderstandings about out-of-system learner pathways to college, the workforce, and beyond. In this session, hear from VELA founders who have successfully supported learners as they explore postsecondary options and demonstrate their readiness through alternative transcripts, resources, coaching, and tech tools. Learn how alternatively schooled students are empowered to succeed in college, career, or wherever their lifelong learning journey takes them.

Moderator: Nasiyah Isra-Ul

Speakers: Peter Laipson, Kym Kent, Tiffany Green

4:00 PM – 4:50 PM
THE GALLERY &
VELA CON LOUNGE

Resource Power Hour

For those seeking more on-site collaboration, this dedicated block will enable knowledge- and resource sharing on the spot. Join us in The Gallery to explore resources with yes. every kid. foundation., Omella, and Khan Academy. The VELA Con Lounge will also be open to connect with peers. Get your legal, operations, and academic questions answered in real-time and build new connections to strengthen your work.

6:00 PM – 8:30 PM
THE GALLERY &
GRAND BALLROOM

Reception & Dinner: Education Reform in Three Acts

Don't miss this special presentation, as **Derrell Bradford** joins VELA Con to share his story, and the story of how education is evolving in America – where it started and where it's headed. Derrell is a tireless advocate for school choice, especially for school choice benefiting children of color from low-income communities. He's a regular commentator on cable news, a favorite podcast guest, and the leader of 50CAN, a movement to build the future of education through policy advocacy. Derrell's recent No More Lines coalition fiercely opposes discriminatory practices embedded in public school residential assignment, and advocates for system transformation so all kids have access to educational opportunity, regardless of where they live.

SATURDAY, JUNE 15

8:00 AM – 9:00 AM
THE GALLERY

Breakfast

Breakfast is available for all event attendees.

9:15 AM – 10:00 AM
GRAND BALLROOM

Morning Plenary: The Transformative Impact of Values-Based Education

VELA is delighted to welcome **Shaun Alexander**, former running back for the Seattle Seahawks and NFL MVP. Shaun and his wife, Valerie, reside in Virginia and are homeschooling parents of their 12 living children. Join us for a special conversation with Shaun to hear about his personal journey from professional athlete to education entrepreneur – and what he envisions for the future of education.

10:20 AM – 11:10 AM
CONSERVATORY AB

Workshop: Legal Ease - Helping Education Entrepreneurs become Confident with Compliance

Are you pioneering new educational pathways but have unanswered questions about regulatory barriers like zoning, occupancy, fire code, childcare and more? Join this workshop to gain insights from top legal experts on how to navigate these often-confusing challenges. Hear a firsthand account from a founder who worked with the Yes legal team to keep their innovative learning space thriving. Bring your questions and experiences to an interactive Q&A session and be prepared to equip yourself with the knowledge to transform legal obstacles into opportunities.

Moderator: *Andrew Clark*

Speakers: *Mike Donnelly, Lynn Swanson, Noah Mayers*

10:20 AM – 11:10 AM
BALLROOM AB

Reimagining Time, Space, Labor: How Founders Innovate to Create Sustainable Businesses

VELA founders innovate on time, space, and labor to ensure that they can offer low-cost education solutions that don't rely on public funding or outside interests. They are champions of creativity and autonomy who focus on delivering quality education tailored to the unique needs of each family. Hear from three founders who wrote their own playbooks on facilities, tuition, and staffing to build sustainable businesses that revolutionize education.

Moderator: *Eric Wearne*

Speakers: *Dominque Burgess, Priscill Yuill, Jessica Slayback*

10:20 AM – 11:10 AM
BALLROOM D

Voices of the Movement: Bringing Alternatives to Conventional Education to the Forefront

Alternatives to conventional schooling are exploding in all 50 states. Thanks to the efforts of storytellers, influencers, and media platforms, there is also increasing cultural awareness and acceptance of nontraditional learning models. Storytellers use their platforms to amplify the movement, inspiring prospective founders to launch new learning environments, families to explore alternatives, and policymakers to consider this growing market as the force that it is. Hear from key storytellers in the unconventional education movement and learn more about the accelerated interest in this sector.

Moderator: Ned Stanley

Speakers: Kerry McDonald, Manisha Snoyer, Elan Page

11:25 AM – 12:15 PM
CONSERVATORY AB

Ecosystems Everywhere: Activating Founder Network Hubs Coast to Coast

Across the country, VELA founders are building thriving hubs of entrepreneurship where founders share resources and knowledge to strengthen their work and communities. VELA's Community Connector program invests in founders who are driving the growth of entrepreneur networks in their communities. In this session, Connectors from entrepreneur hubs in Indiana, Kansas, and Georgia will share how organic, local collaboration is accelerating innovation and empowering founders to succeed and grow. Leave with practical ideas for activating a hub of entrepreneurship in your own community.

Moderator: Shaina Belton

Speakers: Dalena Wallace, Nicole Doyle, Jill Haskins

11:25 AM – 12:15 PM
BALLROOM AB

What is Collective Scale and Why Does It Matter?

Nationwide, VELA founders are activating "collective scale." To-date, nearly 2,500 founders within the VELA Founder Network are collectively serving over 3 million learners and families. Based on the needs of their community, each founder must decide whether to grow and replicate their nontraditional education model or remain intentionally small—and both options have merit. Join this session to hear from founders who have grappled with how, when, and where to scale based on their learning environment's unique circumstances. Learn how thousands of individual models are collectively offering millions of students the education that is right for them.

Moderator: *Erica Cantoni*

Speakers: *Iman Alleyne, Dr. Natalie Summerville, Kelly Smith, Yalonda Chandler*

11:25 AM – 12:15 PM
BALLROOM D

VELA DAO: Innovating at the Intersection of Governance and Philanthropy

What happens when you decentralize philanthropy, technology, and decision-making? Members of the VELA Founder Network journeyed towards a new frontier to create the VELA DAO, a Web3 grantmaking experiment that provides funding through a Decentralized Autonomous Organization (DAO) and a revolutionary philanthropic model that puts ownership in the hands of VELA's founders. Run entirely by VELA founders to exclusively fund VELA founders, the DAO is showing what's possible when philanthropists embrace new tools, technology, and thinking to accelerate knowledge exchange.

Moderator: *Serena Deutch*

Speakers: *Jeana Wilson, Jeff Imrich, Thanasi Dilos*

12:30 PM – 1:30 PM
GRAND BALLROOM

Lunch: The Beautiful Tree in America

In our closing session, hear the inspiring story of **James Tooley**, author of the bestselling book *The Beautiful Tree*, and his journey across the globe visiting low-cost private schools serving some of the most under-resourced communities in the world. Today, Tooley has turned his attention to exploring the new frontiers in education in America. Hear early observations from his forthcoming book, *The Beautiful Tree in America*, exploring alternatives to conventional schooling in the U.S. and featuring the VELA Founder Network. Lunch will be served.
